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1912-09-25

**Letter from S. L. Foster to W[illiam] E. Colby, 1912 Sep 25.**

S. L. Foster

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UNITED RAILROADS OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF CHIEF ELECTRICIAN  
1140 FILLMORE STREET

IN REPLY REFER TO

Calcification of Water  
ful.

San Francisco, Sept. 25th, 1912.

W. E. Colby,  
Secretary, Sierra Club,  
302 Mills Building, City.

Dear Sir:-

It may seem rather "far fetched" and visionary to advance the argument in the Hetch Hetchy matter that the water of the Tuolumne Canyon is too pure and is so free of calcium salts from having run over only granite, that its use is liable to lead to tuberculosis and dental caries but I am going to give you an apparent justification for the argument and leave it to your judgment aided by the advice of some of the good medical, as well as geological members of the Club as to its utility at this time.

In the "Literary Digest" of July 6, 1912 page 217 under the head of "Will Pure Water Harm the Teeth?" appeared an interesting article abstracting comments in European medical journals on the claims of a Dr. Reese - a German physician who claims that absence of calcium salts in drinking water or the use of boiled water predisposes and leads to decay of the teeth. "Obviously, for the same reason, the water of lime stone regions are preferable to those where the soil is granitic." x x x "Decalcification of water is one of the conditions most favorable to the development of tuberculosis", are extracts from this Digest article.

In the San Francisco "Examiner" of July 21st, 1912 in the "Magazine" part is a full paged article entitled "Science Discovers

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that Only the Lime Starved Get Consumption". This is written by a physician Canton Phillips and tells at length about how a Dr. Van Giesen of Germany proved the truth of the title of the article by experiments on lime starved and lime supplied dogs artificially infected with tuberculous bacilli. (NOTE:- The exclusive use by the Chinese of Boiled water in their only beverage - tea - for centuries does not seem to have led to their extermination by consumption. This is, perhaps, because they get their lime salts in their food, as for example, from the outer covering of the unground rice which forms the bulk of the carbohydrate component of their food.)

It is not necessary to tell you that the Tuolumne River runs through a granitic soil. The only "fly in the ointment" is the geological fact that of the eight kinds of feldspar, three are found in granite according to Dana, and one of them, oligoclase carries calcium salts. What kind of feldspar is present in the granite of the Tuolumne Canyon, I do not know. If it is not oligoclase, there is some basis for this argument of mine though probably it will be combatted by the statement that the calcium salts will be furnished by the admixture of the lime saturated water of the Spring Valley Water Company supply.

Probably one of the members of the Sierra Club who is a geologist can tell you off hand whether the feldspar in the Tuolumne Canyon granite is orthoclase or oligoclase or albite or microcline or at any rate, whether it is of the kind that would impart lime salts to water flowing over it.

As I am neither a physician nor a geologist, I am possibly lost in the scientific wilderness of those callings.



Mr. W.E.C. - #3.

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A simple solution of the question and one that probably you have made or can learn about from Mr. Manson - is to analyze for lime, the water of the Tuolumne as it enters Netch Netchy Vally.

I must admit, however, that I do not think much of this decalcification argument of mine because, from the great frequency with which demijohns of distilled water are to be seen in business offices in San Francisco, I have gained the idea that there is an excess of lime in the Spring Valley Company's water already and that the mixture with it of some of the melted snow from Mt. Lyell may be a most desirable thing for us all. Still, if the other side is not prepared for it, this decalcification g-bogie may cause a little confusion in their attack and worry, then some and every little counts.

The long delay to the final discussion seems also to have put into your hands additional arguments through the recent activity of the automobile owners who have a meeting planned for next month in Yosemite valley with Major Forsythe and Secretary Fisner when they expect to bring all their guns to bear on the question of securing admission to "the valley", probably via the Big Oak Flat Road.

They also, as you know, look forward next to the rehabilitation of the Tioga Road for automobile use.

If \$1,000,000.00 can be raised, as the auto owners hope, to put the Big Oak Flat and the Tioga Road in order for their use, it takes little imagination to figure out the trail from Hog Ranch to Netch Netchy valley being also made in time an automobile road, when the typhoid contamination arguments acquire

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renewed force. Active young spirits, who can be landed by automobiles in Tuolumne Meadows or Netch Netchy Valley without exhaustion and with ample resources of food and other outing supplies will most certainly make many short and also long fishing excursions into the Tuolumne Canyon and up its many secluded and interesting trout filled tributaries.

A summer line of automobiles to carry nature lovers, not owning their own machines, from Chinese Camp to Yosemite and Tuolumne Meadows is the next easily logical assumption when the Big Oak flat and Tioga roads are put in order and thrown open for auto use.

All these things have probably occurred to your wide awake mind but I have rambled on and unloaded my story as it came to me in case it might have some points of view of value to you at the hearing of the case at Washington.

I must not forget to congratulate you on your discovery of Colby Pass in the Kern River country this summer as reported in the papers and the acquisition of Tuolumne Meadows.

Very truly yours,

*S. L. Foster.*

1098 Dolores Street.

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